



A Sense of the Whole: Reading Gary Snyder's Mountains and Rivers Without End

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In 1997, Mark Gonnerman organized a yearlong research workshop on Gary Snyder's Mountains and Rivers Without End at the Stanford Humanities Center. Members of what came to be known among faculty, students, and diverse community members as the Mountains & Rivers Workshop met regularly to read and discuss Snyder's epic poem. Here the poem served as a commons that turned the multiversity into a university once again, if only for a moment.

The Workshop invited writers, teachers and scholars from Northern California and Japan to speak on various aspects of Snyder's great accomplishment. This book captures the excitement of these gatherings and invites readers to enter the poem through essays and talks by David Abram, Wendell Berry, Carl Bielefeldt, Tim Dean, Jim Dodge, Robert Hass, Stephanie Kaza, Julia Martin, Michael McClure, Nanao Sakaki, and Katsunori Yamazato. It includes an interview with Gary Snyder, appendices, and other resources for further study.

Snyder once introduced a reading of this work with reference to whitewater rapids, saying most of his writing is like a Class III run where you will do just fine on your own, but that Mountains and Rivers is more like Class V: if you're going to make it to take-out, you need a guide. As a collection of commentaries and background readings, this companion volume enhances each reader's ability to find their way into and through an adventurous and engaging work of art.

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